

Consultation on the future of Limavady Courthouse

This consultation begins on Friday 29 May 2026.

This consultation ends on Friday 21 August 2026.

Friday 29 May 2026

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Ministerial Foreword

The Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service (NICTS) is an Agency of the Department of Justice (DoJ). In support of the DoJ's Mission of "working in partnership to create a fair, just and safe community where we respect the law and each other", NICTS has three overarching Aims: Working in Partnership; Supporting the Judiciary; Improving Courts and Tribunals.

*'Making the Place for Justice'*¹ is the NICTS' Estate Strategy, which was published in December 2023, following engagement with an Estate Strategy Advisory Group comprising representatives from the legal profession and justice partners. The Strategy is structured around 4 Aims and 12 Strategic Outcomes, that if realised, will result in a courts and tribunals estate that can provide modernised and improved facilities for all citizens of Northern Ireland. This will require evidence-based decisions to be taken on how best to prioritise and invest available budget within the NICTS estate portfolio, whilst recognising the budgetary challenges that have been faced by my Department for some time.

This consultation is seeking views on a proposal for the permanent closure and disposal of Limavady Courthouse, resulting in the permanent reallocation of Limavady Adult Magistrates Court business to an alternative courthouse within the NICTS estate that can provide better facilities to service users. This consultation does not propose any change to the current operational arrangement of the separate listing of Limavady Adult Magistrates court business in Coleraine Courthouse.

Evidence to date indicates that Limavady Courthouse falls far below the standards that all court users should rightly expect and that there are significant physical and financial constraints that would prevent NICTS' achievement of its Estate Strategy aims within Limavady Courthouse.

This proposal aligns with NICS guidance on Managing Public Money² and supports the Department's Corporate Plan³. Implementation of the proposal would enable NICTS to focus and prioritise investment to provide improved user experience, value for money, resilience and sustainability elsewhere across the NICTS estate where this is more achievable, whilst

¹ <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/justice/nicts-estates-strategy-23-30.pdf>

² <https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/articles/managing-public-money-ni-mpmni>

³ <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2025-09/corporate%20business%20plan%20%202025-28%20and%202025-2026.pdf>

ensuring that the people of Limavady continue to have access to justice within more suitable court facilities.

Through this consultation, I am seeking the views of local representatives, court users, judiciary, the legal profession, other justice sector organisations, the community sector and other interested parties across Northern Ireland to better understand the impact that the proposal may have. While it will be of particular interest to those within the Limavady area, the proposal is also relevant to the wider NICTS estate and the efficient and sustainable operation of the justice system overall.

I recognise the positive impact that the closure and community asset transfer of Bangor Courthouse had upon the City, both from a social and economic perspective. And while my Department must comply with public sector disposal procedures if I take the decision to permanently close Limavady Courthouse, I would welcome views on how Limavady Courthouse could be repurposed within the community.

I would urge anyone with an interest in, or views on, the subject to consider this proposal and respond to the consultation so that I can consider their views fully before making a final decision on the future of Limavady Courthouse.

Naomi Long MLA

Minister of Justice

Proposal

This consultation is seeking views on a proposal for the permanent closure and disposal of Limavady Courthouse, resulting in the permanent reallocation of Limavady Adult Magistrates Court business to an alternative courthouse in the NICTS estate that provides better facilities to service users.

Limavady Courthouse is currently temporarily closed. It was last used for court business in March 2020, when it operated as a Hearing Centre for Adult Magistrates Court once a week. As pandemic-related public health measures could not be accommodated in Limavady Courthouse, Limavady business was transferred to Ballymena Courthouse, then to Coleraine Courthouse, where it continues to be heard once a week.

As case listing is a judicial matter, this consultation does not propose any change to the current operational arrangement of the separate listing of Limavady court business in Coleraine Courthouse.

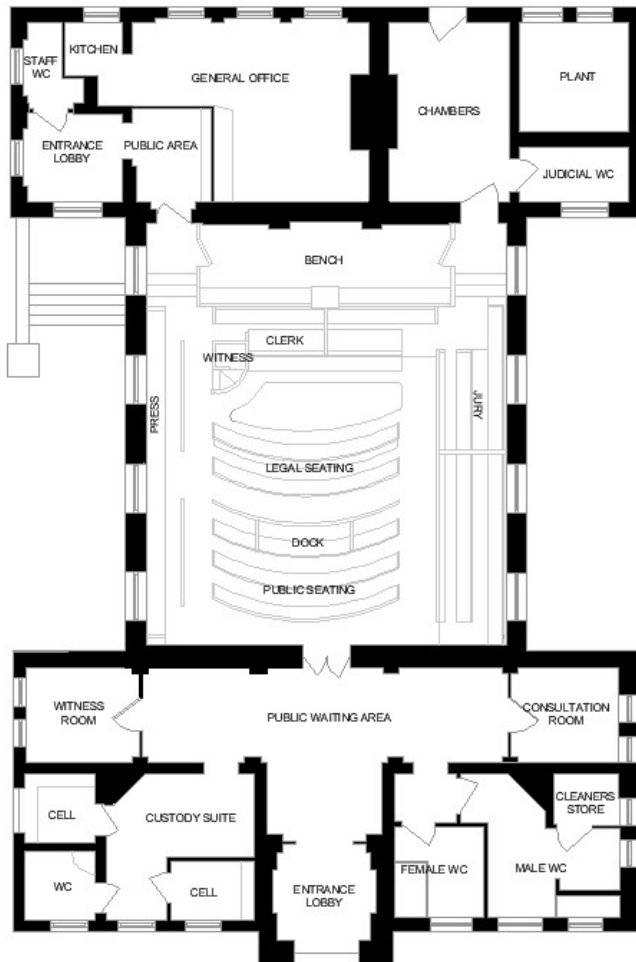
Following consultation, if a decision is taken to permanently close Limavady Courthouse, NICTS will be required to dispose of Limavady Courthouse according to the policy on the Disposal of Surplus Public Sector Property in Northern Ireland⁴ which provides opportunities for disposal through identifiable pathways: Internal Market Public Sector Circulation, Internal Market Community Asset Transfer Circulation or External Market.

The funding derived from the disposal of Limavady Courthouse, and the revenue released through reduced running and maintenance costs, would be managed within the overall Departmental budget.

Further detail on the policy considerations and the impact of this proposal on NICTS stakeholders has been provided within this consultation paper and the impact assessments published on the Department of Justice website.

⁴ <https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2025-06/lps-disposal-surplus-public-sector-property-ni-policy.pdf>

Limavady Courthouse



Limavady Courthouse is situated at Main Street, Limavady, BT49 0EY. It was constructed between 1914 and 1915.

While Limavady Courthouse is not a Listed Building, it has been recorded on the NI Buildings Database⁵ to be of architectural or historic interest. It is not situated within a designated Conservation Area⁶.

Notable architectural features include the steep pitched main roof and pyramidal roof over the tower, interlocking arched stones above the entrance door and fluted moulding between window heads. A combination of stone boundary wall, metal railing and chain-link fence encompass the perimeter, and a small yard carpark is provided to the rear, accessed via a roller shutter to the side.

The floor area of the building is 253m². The building has a single courtroom with adjoining judicial chambers and a small administration office. The public waiting area is located in the lobby off the courtroom and also includes public toilets, a custody suite and two consultation rooms, one of which is designated for victims and witnesses.

⁵ <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/services/buildings-database>

⁶ <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/articles/conservation-area-guides-z-list>

Limavady Court Business

The listing of court business is a judicial function, and the guiding principles for the distribution and transfer of business between Courthouses are included in Practice Direction 5/16⁷, published by the then Lord Chief Justice in 2016.

Limavady Court jurisdiction sits within the North Eastern Administrative Court Division (ACD), which also includes Laganside (Belfast), Antrim, Ballymena and Coleraine. The catchment area for Limavady Courthouse covers 10 geographical wards within Causeway Coast and Glens District Council: Althahullion, Ballykelly, Coolestan, Drumsurn, Dungiven, Feeny, Greysteel, Greystone, Magilligan and Roeside. The population of the area according to the 2021 census is 34,049.

Under the Practice Direction, court users from the Limavady area attend Antrim Courthouse for Crown business, and Coleraine Courthouse for County Court, Domestic Proceedings, Family Proceedings Court, Family Care Centre and Youth Court.

Limavady Courthouse was last used for court business in March 2020, when it operated as a Hearing Centre for Adult Magistrates Court once a week. As a Hearing Centre, the venue was only opened for scheduled court hearings, and no administration staff or judiciary were permanently based there.

As pandemic-related public health measures could not be accommodated in Limavady Courthouse, Limavady business was transferred to Ballymena Courthouse, then to Coleraine Courthouse, where it is separately listed and continues to be heard once a week.

During the period of temporary closure since March 2020, statistics on Limavady court business continued to be recorded separately through the NICTS Integrated Court Operating System (ICOS).

Table 1 shows that the volume of Limavady Adult Magistrates Court business received is consistently the lowest in the North Eastern Division.

⁷ <https://www.judiciaryni.uk/judicial-decisions/lcj-direction-516-direction-governing-distribution-and-transfer-court-business>

Table 1: Adult Magistrates Court Business Received 2014-25 North Eastern Division

Calendar Year	Antrim	Ballymena	Belfast	Coleraine	Limavady
2014	1,326	1,565	12,101	1,886	741
2015	1,455	1,668	12,321	2,074	661
2016	1,385	1,621	12,596	1,728	654
2017	1,242	1,866	12,318	1,698	577
2018	1,471	2,021	12,294	1,749	595
2019	1,533	2,069	13,612	1,905	603
2020	1,109	1,592	9,444	1,378	381
2021	1,333	2,112	11,016	1,655	556
2022	1,148	2,482	11,004	1,604	556
2023	1,700	2,298	12,322	1,684	495
2024	1,498	1,970	11,744	1,463	561
2025 (Provisional)	1,344	1,818	10,492	1,287	401
Total	16,544	23,082	141,264	20,111	6,781

Limavady Adult Magistrates Court business is also consistently the lowest volume of business received when compared to Adult Magistrates Court business at other court locations across NI. The 401 cases received for Limavady in 2025 accounted for 1.2% of the Northern Ireland total. This is lower than the position in 2019 before the temporary closure, when the 603 cases received at Limavady accounted for 1.47% of the Northern Ireland total.

Table 2: Disposals by charge type 2025 (Calendar Year, Provisional) for Limavady & Northern Ireland

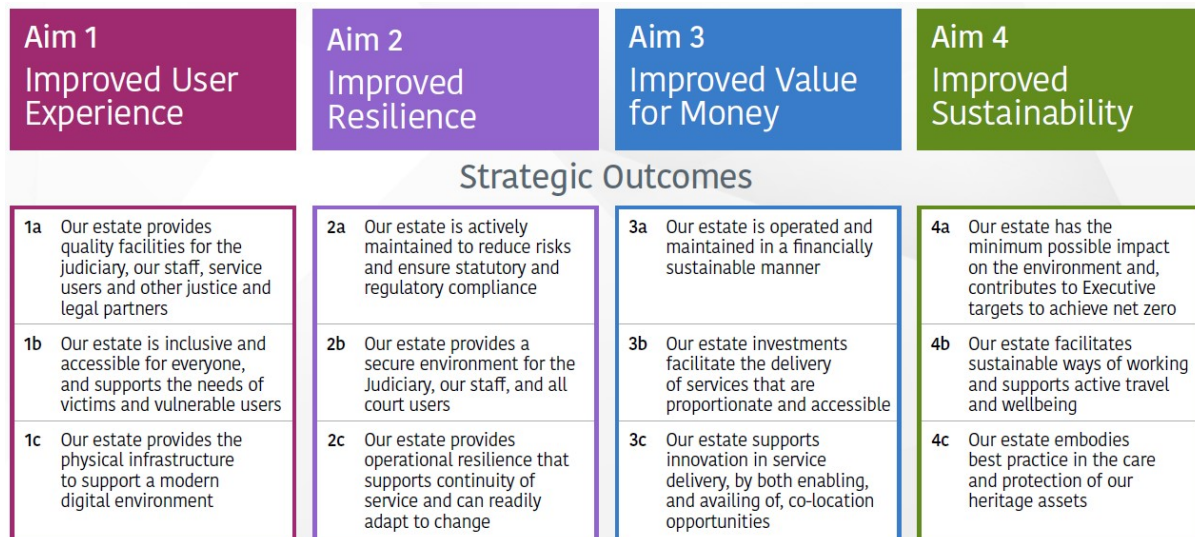
Charge Type	Limavady	% of Limavady Total	Northern Ireland	% of Northern Ireland Total
All Offences Against the Person	40	10%	2,579	8%
All Sexual Offences	8	2%	631	2%
All Burglary Offences	1	0%	193	1%
All Robbery Offences	0	0%	30	0%
All Theft Offences	19	5%	1,815	5%
All Fraud and Forgery Offences	7	2%	365	1%
All Criminal Damage Offences	12	3%	623	2%
All Offences Against the State	8	2%	650	2%
All Other Offences	24	6%	2,243	7%
All Drug Offences	21	5%	2,099	6%
All Motoring Offences	178	42%	13,132	39%
All Non Police Offences	8	2%	326	1%
All Breach	7	2%	516	2%
Combination of charges	87	21%	8,103	24%
Total	420	100%	33,305	100%
Limavady disposals as a percentage of all Northern Ireland disposals		1.26%		

Table 2 shows disposals for Limavady business by charge type for 2025, compared to the overall Northern Ireland total for each charge type. The proportion of disposals by charge type in the Limavady is generally similar to the proportion of disposals across Northern Ireland.

In 2025, compared to the Northern Ireland total, Limavady dealt with a higher proportion of disposals in relation to All Motoring Offences (+3 percentage points), All Offences Against the Person (+2 percentage points), All Fraud and Forgery Offences (+1 percentage point), All Criminal Damage Offences (+1 percentage point), and All Non Police Offences (+1 percentage point); and a lower proportion of disposals in relation to All Burglary Offences (-1 percentage point), All Other Offences (-1 percentage point), All Drug Offences (-1 percentage point) and Combination of charges (-3 percentage points).

Strategic Asset Assessment

The NICTS Estate Strategy established a framework for how NICTS will use data and evidence to prioritise investment in its buildings in the years ahead. Achieving the 4 Aims and 12 Strategic Outcomes outlined in the NICTS Estate Strategy will result in a courts and tribunals estate that can provide modernised and improved facilities for all citizens of Northern Ireland.



A Strategic Asset Assessment was undertaken to assess NICTS use of the Limavady Courthouse against the 4 Aims and 12 Strategic Outcomes set out in the NICTS Estates Strategy.

This section outlines the considerations within the Strategic Asset Assessment, and the NICTS assessment of the strength of alignment with the NICTS Estate Strategy – i.e good alignment, acceptable alignment or poor alignment.

Aim 1- Improved User Experience

Aim 1 - Improved User Experience

1a

Our estate provides quality facilities for the judiciary, our staff, service users and other justice and legal partners

Poor alignment

Courts and tribunals are highly valued by those that use and work in them. For Adult Magistrates Court this includes a wide range of partners and stakeholders with diverse needs:

- The judiciary
- Legal representatives
- NICTS court staff
- Prisoner Escorting and Court Custody Service staff (PECCS)
- Contracted Security Staff
- Adult defendants and plaintiffs
- Injured parties (who may be adults or children)
- Witnesses (who may be adults or children)
- Public Prosecution Service
- Third sector support groups such as Victim Support NI and NSPCC
- Citizens attending courthouse proceedings as observers
- Media representatives

There have been long-standing concerns about the quality of accommodation at Limavady Courthouse, in terms of both the fabric of the building and the extent to which the facilities meet the requirements of court users.

In 2012, the Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJINI) report on 'An Inspection of the NICTS Courts Estate'⁸ highlighted considerable variations in the quality of the facilities

⁸ <https://www.cjini.org/reports/northern-ireland-courts-and-tribunals-service-an-inspection-of-the-adequacy-of-the-courts-estate/>

available across the NICTS Estate. Each court property was scored against four categories: location, accessibility, form and layout and function. Inspectors then combined condition surveys, data from maintenance and improvement works, audits of compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act and site visits, to arrive at an assessment of the quality of the property. The quality of Limavady Courthouse was assessed by CJINI as **'Poor quality'** and described this as: *'overall condition is fair, major building works required now or in the short-term, health and safety issues require significant work. Significant non-compliance with Disability Discrimination Act requirements. Infrastructure presents barriers to ensuring Disability Discrimination Act compliance and provision of special measures.'*

In 2019, NICTS commissioned external consultants to undertake condition surveys across the NICTS Estate. The condition category of Limavady Courthouse was assessed as **Satisfactory** (*Structurally sound, reasonably acceptable, possible minor repairs, condition can be maintained*), with a score of 54%. This falls below the **'Good quality'** standard, requiring a minimum score of 70%, that is considered a success factor in the NICTS Estates Strategy. Due to the age of the building, remedial maintenance and redecoration works were recommended for the majority of building elements. The report stated that considerable investment was required over the following 30 years to upgrade and maintain the property to a good standard.

In addition to condition-based deficiencies, the report highlighted a number of deficiencies in relation to the configuration of NICTS accommodation and facilities in terms of meeting the expectations of court users.

For court staff, the general office at Limavady Courthouse has a limited floor area of 19m² which includes a public counter. The general office only has a single route of escape, and while there is a kitchenette there are no separate facilities for either rest, private conversations or virtual meetings. The limited space in the staff office and absence of welfare or meeting facilities mean that even a wholesale redecoration would be unlikely to sufficiently improve the quality and adequacy of the space as a workplace.

While facilities for members of the public at Limavady Courthouse would benefit from cosmetic redecoration and replacement of furniture and fittings, the quality and adequacy of facilities is impacted by the lack of available space.

Other deficiencies that negatively affect the experience of court users in the Limavady Courthouse have been outlined later in this paper under:

- **1b:** Our estate is inclusive and accessible for everyone, supporting the needs of victims and vulnerable users; and
- **2b:** Our estate provides a secure environment for the Judiciary, our staff, and all court users

As Limavady Courthouse was temporarily closed shortly after the 2019 report, there has been no planned maintenance or capital investment to address these issues due to the prioritisation of other investment activity across the estate.

From April 2020 to December 2025, £86,753 has been spent on essential maintenance at Limavady Courthouse due NICTS' ongoing stewardship of the building including a boiler replacement and replacement of damaged guttering.

By comparison, in the 2012 CJINI report Coleraine Courthouse was assessed as '**High quality**', described as: *'Overall condition is good. No building work required, health and safety issues are of operational nature. Generally good compliance with Disability Discrimination Act requirements with some modifications required to meet health and safety standards and provision of special measures.'*

In the condition survey conducted by external consultants in 2019, the condition category of Coleraine Courthouse was assessed as **Satisfactory** (*Structurally sound, reasonably acceptable, possible minor repairs, condition can be maintained*), with a score of 59% – sharing the same condition category as Limavady, but with a higher score. This is reflective of the general historic under-investment across the NICTS estate, where no buildings scored higher than a Satisfactory category. Coleraine Courthouse therefore also fell below the **Good** standard that that is considered a success factor in the NICTS Estates Strategy.

However, between April 2020 to December 2025, £519,764 has been spent on maintenance at Coleraine Courthouse to improve the standard and condition of the building. This includes an LED lighting upgrade, gas heating conversion and general redecoration.

While there are further improvements that could be made within Coleraine Courthouse subject to the availability and prioritisation of funding, NICTS considers that Coleraine Courthouse offers higher quality, safer, more modern and more accessible facilities, when compared to Limavady Courthouse. These include a higher quality of custodial facilities, increased opportunities for segregation of victims, witnesses and defendants, better consultation facilities, better waiting facilities, improved technology to allow for remote

attendance and the use of pre-recorded video evidence, access to disabled toilets, better facilities for accessing and navigating the building for non-ambulant users, improved office accommodation and facilities for justice sector partners such as Victim Support NI, Women’s Aid, and Public Prosecution Service.

It would be extremely difficult for NICTS to secure funding to resolve the issues at Limavady Courthouse based on value for money considerations, particularly in the context of low business volumes for Limavady and the demands across the wider NICTS estate.

Aim 1 - Improved User Experience

1b Our estate is inclusive and accessible for everyone, supporting the needs of victims and vulnerable users

Poor alignment

Meeting the needs of persons with disabilities

Article 13 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Person with Disabilities⁹ states that “States Parties shall ensure effective access to justice for persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others, including through the provision of procedural and age-appropriate accommodations, in order to facilitate their effective role as direct and indirect participants, including as witnesses, in all legal proceedings, including at investigative and other preliminary stages.”

In this Charter this is given effect through a range of provisions, including the special measures that can be applied for to assist vulnerable and intimidated witnesses to give evidence to the police and at court, as well as other assistance to help people to understand and be understood. This is in addition to the general provisions that service providers would have available and which are not necessarily specific to the giving of evidence at court.

In 2021, a disability access audit was completed for Limavady Courthouse by a chartered building surveyor. This access audit report focuses primarily on any potential shortcomings in the physical features of the building and the adjustments required to alleviate the shortcomings. The inspection and report were carried out against a comprehensive checklist of issues derived from:

⁹ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities>

- *BS8300:2009, Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people - Code of Practice; and*
- *Approved Technical Booklet R (Access to and use of buildings) of the Building Regulation (NI) 2012.*

The access audit showed that Limavady Courthouse is not accessible to all users. It cited a number of difficulties that wheelchair or non-ambulant court users will experience when gaining access to and navigating the building, particularly within the courtroom. The audit highlighted that the building does not provide any accessible toilet facilities, and that the public counter cannot accommodate wheelchair users.

As Limavady Courthouse has not been in active use since the audit was undertaken, no progress has been made in addressing these issues due to the prioritisation of other investment activity across the estate. If Limavady Courthouse was to be brought back into use once a week for Adult Magistrates Court, it is unlikely that the priority level of these works would change significantly due to the low business volumes.

As currently configured, NICTS considers that the facilities at Limavady Courthouse are not accessible to all users. More accessible facilities are readily available at Coleraine Courthouse.

Victims and vulnerable users

There are a number of guiding standards that focus specifically on the needs of victims and witnesses in the criminal justice system including the Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1999¹⁰, Department of Justice (DoJ) Witness Charter¹¹, the DoJ Victims Charter¹² and The Gillen Review Report and Recommendations¹³.

Other justice partners are responsible for policy and support services in relation to the needs of victims and witnesses in the criminal justice system. NICTS' role is to facilitate the implementation of these policies and support services within our courthouses, particularly in relation to the support available at court when victims and witnesses are giving evidence.

¹⁰ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1999/2789/contents>

¹¹ <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/justice/witness-charter.PDF>

¹² <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/justice/Victim%20Charter.pdf>

¹³ <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/topics/gillen-review-report-law-and-procedures-serious-sexual-offences-ni>

Limavady Courthouse falls short of the guiding standards in a number of areas:

- While there is a separate waiting room for victims and witnesses, those using it are required to walk past the custodial area and through the public waiting area to reach it or to use the courtroom or toilet facilities.
- The waiting room for victims and witnesses is small, with a floor area of 6m², which limits the number of supporters who can wait with them.
- The public waiting area is also small, significantly limiting the capacity for different parties to avoid each other before entering court.
- There are no live video link facilities to allow victims and witnesses to give evidence from outside of the courtroom.
- There is no technology available in the courtroom to enable pre-recorded video evidence to be heard in court.

It would be extremely difficult for NICTS to secure funding to resolve the issues at Limavady Courthouse based on value for money considerations, particularly in the context of low business volumes for Limavady and the demands across the wider NICTS estate.

By comparison, in Coleraine Courthouse there is a larger waiting room for victims and witnesses which is well segregated from the custodial area. Although it is accessed through the main public waiting area, and shares public toilet facilities, the main waiting area is significantly larger allowing better opportunities for the segregation of parties. There is a live link room for witnesses, allowing them to give evidence from outside the courtroom where required. Technology is also available in the courtrooms to allow for remote attendance and the use of pre-recorded video evidence.

As currently configured, NICTS considers that the facilities at Limavady Courthouse are not of standard that could meet the specific requirements of victims and witnesses. Improved facilities are readily available and currently used at Coleraine Courthouse.

Travelling to the courthouse

As part of the commitment to Safer Communities within the Programme for Government¹⁴, DoJ is progressing a Speeding Up Justice Programme through an Executive agreed approach to reducing offending and reoffending, contributing to delivery of improved outcomes for those who engage with the justice system. This includes exploring options for expanding the use of Out of Court Disposals, including Community Resolution Notices, to speed up time taken to dispose of those cases, and help to reduce pressure on Courts and other justice agencies.

Attendance at Court will however continue to be an important part of the justice system, and proximity to the courthouse is a relevant aspect in terms of access to justice.

NICTS has undertaken a Travel Impact Assessment in relation to the reallocation of business from Limavady Courthouse to Coleraine Courthouse. Further analysis of the impact of increased travel on particular groups has also been considered within in the Equality Screening and the Rural Needs Impact Assessment. (All impact assessments, including the Travel Impact Assessment, are published on the Department of Justice website).

It is clear that the reallocation of Limavady Adult Magistrates Court business to Coleraine Courthouse results in increased travel for the majority of Adult Magistrates Court users in the Limavady area for both driven journeys and public transport journeys. This has been the case since business was transferred in March 2020.

The 2021 NI Census showed that 84% of households within the Limavady District Electoral area have access to at least one car or van. NICTS 2025 (provisional data) shows that 42% of Limavady Adult Magistrates Court business related to motoring offences. There is a reasonable assumption that the majority of court users are likely to travel by car or van, with a lesser impact than those travelling by public transport.

For driven journeys, the average journey of 22.74 minutes from the Limavady Courthouse catchment area to Coleraine Courthouse is above the NI average of 14.03 minutes, but it does not exceed the drive time experienced by some other Adult Magistrates Court users in NI. For public transport users, 80% of journeys would have added complexity in terms of service transfers. The average journey would increase by 49 minutes from 1 hour 20

¹⁴ <https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/articles/programme-government-2024-2027-our-plan-doing-what-matters-most>

minutes to 2 hours 9 minutes. The most significant increase requires an additional 1 hour 54 minutes, bringing the total journey time to 2 hours 28 minutes. The longest journey requires a total journey time of 2 hours 56 minutes, which is 3 minutes longer than the 2 hours 53 minutes journey they would need to make to Limavady Courthouse.

Taking all of these factors into account, including the mitigations set out below, and the screenings and impact assessments, NICTS considers that that increased travel associated with the reallocation of Limavady Adult Magistrates Court business to Coleraine Courthouse is reasonable and justified by the legitimate aim of implementing the NICTS Estate Strategy and providing Limavady court users with access to higher quality, safer, more modern and more accessible courthouse facilities.

NICTS further considers that the impact of increased travel is mitigated by several factors:

- The number of court users experiencing increased travel will be low.
- Attendance at a courthouse is an infrequent occurrence for most people.
- Attendance at Coleraine Courthouse will be more convenient for some court users.
- The analysis of public transport journeys was based on solely using public transport (and walking where necessary). Some court attendees will use a mixed mode of travel, and this will reduce the travel time overall.
- The Disability Action Transport Scheme¹⁵ (DATS), funded through grant assistance provided by the Department for Infrastructure, is a local transport service for disabled people, older individuals and those who find it difficult to use public transport. While DATS cannot facilitate travel from Limavady to Coleraine, they can facilitate easier access to public transport links in Limavady.
- Older people over 60 are eligible for free travel on public transport across NI through the Translink Smartpass.
- The increased travel does not exceed travel requirements for other court users across NI.
- The increased travel aligns with travel requirements for users in the Limavady area who attend court for other tiers of court business.
- Remote attendance at court can be facilitated (Subject to judicial approval).

¹⁵ <https://www.disabilityaction.org/Pages/Category/transport>

- Video evidence at court can be facilitated (Subject to judicial approval).
- Later start times can be facilitated by exception (Subject to judicial approval).
- Future policy and technological changes may result in a reduced requirement for courthouse attendance.
- When the Public Prosecution Service (PPS) calls victims and witnesses of crime to court to give evidence in the prosecution of cases, the PPS will pay travel and subsistence expenses and compensation for loss of earnings in attending, subject to daily capped rates. Claims can also be made in relation to childcare costs.¹⁶

Aim 1 - Improved User Experience

1c Our estate provides the physical infrastructure to support a modern digital environment

Poor alignment

Linked to Vision 2030, the NICTS' Modernisation Portfolio, NICTS is working to provide the necessary infrastructure to support digital modernisation across the NICTS estate, including the facilitation of remote and hybrid courts and e-bundles. The digital infrastructure at Limavady Courthouse is significantly limited:

- The Courtroom is not equipped with the technology necessary to facilitate remote or hybrid attendance, or to display digital evidence.
- WiFi is not available within the building.
- The consultation rooms and witness rooms are not digitally enabled.
- The staff office and judicial chambers have hard wired network infrastructure but there are no facilities available to participate in, or host, virtual meetings.

It would be extremely difficult for NICTS to secure funding to resolve these issues based on value for money considerations, particularly in the context of low business volumes for Limavady and the demands across the wider NICTS estate.

¹⁶ <https://www.ppsni.gov.uk/witness-expenses>

Aim 2: Improved Resilience

Aim 2 - Improved Resilience		
2a	Our estate is actively maintained to reduce risks and ensure statutory and regulatory compliance	Acceptable alignment

Although Limavady Courthouse has been temporarily closed since 2020, all statutory cyclical maintenance regimes have been maintained, and Limavady Courthouse remains statutorily compliant:

- A fire alarm and detection system is operating and compliant
- The most recent fire risk assessment for the building was carried out in November 2025
- A legionella inspection and testing regime is in place
- There is an asbestos management report for the building

As outlined above in relation to user experience, a disability access audit undertaken in 2021 identified 63 non-compliance issues within the Courthouse which would cost in the region of £154,700 to remediate. It would be extremely difficult for NICTS to secure funding to resolve these issues based on value for money considerations, particularly in the context of low business volumes for Limavady and the demands across the wider NICTS estate.

Aim 2 - Improved Resilience		
2b	Our estate provides a secure environment for the Judiciary, our staff, and all court users	Poor alignment

A fundamental aspect of security design is to have clearly segregated zones for public, staff, judiciary and custody. In Limavady Courthouse, while there is segregation of the judicial chambers from the public zones, there are significant security and safety risks related to the design and layout of the building.

The last security review of the building highlighted the absence of an Archway Metal Detector (AMD) at the security search area, the single escape route from the staff office, and the fact that the absence of a vehicle dock means that prison vehicles must park on the public road. There is no secure and designated route into the custody suite, or between the custody suite and courtroom. Individuals in custody appearing before Limavady Magistrates'

Court must be escorted from the public road, through the main public entrance and across the public waiting area to reach the custody suite. When called to appear before the court, individuals must then be escorted through the public waiting area and through the courtroom, to sit in the open dock, directly in front of the public gallery.

The deficiencies with the custodial facilities have the potential to:

- Increase the risk of prisoner escape.
- Increase the risk to the safety of Prisoner Escort and Court Custody Service officers.
- Increase the risks to the safety of other court users.
- Increase the risk of traumatisation of victims.
- Negatively impact the dignity of defendants in custody.
- Increase the risk of public order incidents within the court or waiting area.

In 2022, a report on Court Custody: The Detention of Persons in the Custody of the Court in Northern Ireland¹⁷ by Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJINI) recorded the findings from an assessment of court custody facilities against a set of Expectations for detainees in court custody. The Expectations were developed for the rolling programme of inspections of court custody in England and Wales by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP). The Expectations were drawn up after consultation and are based on, and referenced against, relevant international and regional human rights standards. They also draw on the cumulative learning of court custody inspections to date and best practice. HMIP updated the Expectations in 2020, and these were adapted for use in Northern Ireland and agreed with the PSNI, the NICTS and the Prisoner Escort and Court Custody Service (PECCS).

The CJINI inspection highlighted that the custody area contains 2 holding cells, with one single cramped area for booking in, staff breaks and property storage. There is nowhere for those in custody to discuss personal medical or other sensitive welfare issues. CJINI stated that they did not believe that the court custody suite in Limavady fulfilled Expectation 4.1 '*detainees are held in a custody suite that feels and is safe and is in a good state of repair*'; and assessed the custody facilities in Limavady Courthouse as potentially unsafe.

In 2023, PECCS and NICTS staff conducted a joint assessment of the custody suite at Limavady, against the *Expectations for Detainees in Court Custody*. That joint assessment scored the custody suite as **64%** compliant, confirming the CJINI opinion that the facilities present a potentially unsafe environment for court users. By comparison, the joint

¹⁷ <https://cjini.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Court-Custody-Report-FINAL-Tagged.pdf>

assessment of the custody suite at Coleraine Courthouse against the *Expectations for Detainees in Court Custody* scored **94%** compliance with the expected standard.

Despite these risks, there were no recorded incidents in relation to the identified safety and security risks when Limavady Courthouse was in use. While the low business volumes would reduce the likelihood of an incident occurring at Limavady Courthouse, the inherent risk around potentially serious consequences to the safety of court users remains high. NICTS has a duty of care in relation to those who use, and work in our buildings.

Based on these assessments, NICTS does not consider the increased risks associated with the use of Limavady Courthouse to be acceptable. Higher quality and safer custodial facilities are available and currently used at Coleraine Courthouse.

Aim 2 - Improved Resilience

2c Our estate provides operational resilience that supports continuity of service and can readily adapt to change

Poor alignment

The flexibility and resilience of Limavady Courthouse is significantly constrained by the size and configuration of the existing building and site - the presence of adjoining properties and roads rendering the possibility of a future extension of the building impossible. Additionally, the ability of the building to adapt to a future pandemic, or the effects of climate change, is objectively limited by the current absence of a mechanical ventilation system - a fact that (along with limited space) ultimately contributed to the temporary closure in 2020.

NICTS has considered whether there is any benefit to having the additional capacity at Limavady Courthouse available for operational resilience purposes, for example if there was a business need for increased capacity within the wider Division or should the capacity at other courthouses within the Division be unexpectedly reduced. Analysis of utilisation rates of other courthouses within the North Eastern Administrative Court Division (comprising Belfast, Antrim, Ballymena, Coleraine and Limavady) indicates that there is sufficient capacity at other venues within the Division for the transfer of business should a risk to service continuity arise.

The spatial limitations in Limavady Courthouse mean that the ability to adapt to change within the courthouse is very limited. As detailed above, the building cannot readily accommodate court users with restricted mobility and local adjustments such as Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans currently need to be put in place.

Public health-related social distancing requirements were not able to be accommodated at Limavady Courthouse during the Covid pandemic, demonstrating the impediments of spatial limitations and lack of flexible operating space. As such, Limavady Courthouse is highly unlikely to be considered as a potential alternative venue in the context of operational resilience and managing business continuity risks, in comparison to larger courthouses where additional flexibility and operational space already exist.

Aim 3: Improved Value for Money

Aim 3 - Improved Value for Money	
3a	Our estate is operated and maintained in a financially sustainable manner Poor alignment

The NICTS estate currently comprises 23 properties across Northern Ireland, (of which 21 are freehold) with buildings in every county and local government district. The estate has an approximate value of £230m. In 2024-25, running costs across the estate totalled £18.06million.

There is a widely held view that the NICTS estate falls short of the standards expected by users due to historic underinvestment and layout constraints within some of our buildings. The first NICTS State of the Estate Report, completed in December 2021, confirmed that a large proportion of NICTS buildings are at a condition whereby many elements have reached, or are reaching, end of life status and indicates, in detail, that over the next decade these buildings will require significant investment to address a backlog in maintenance and reduce the probability of critical failures occurring.

In addition to condition-based deficiencies, the configuration of NICTS accommodation and facilities also requires improvement built around modern technology, new ways of working, optimised service delivery models and the expectations of service users. Significant investment will be required to bring the NICTS estate up to the expected standards and to fully achieve the aims set out within the NICTS Estate Strategy.

As a building extension beyond the existing site boundary would be cost prohibitive and constrained by road infrastructure and adjacencies, NICTS considered a high-level concept design which looked at whether the functional deficiencies could be addressed within the

existing site footprint. The high-level concept indicated that some improvements could be made through internal reconfiguration but would also require an extension of the building by an additional 224m² which is not feasible. In addition, significant capital investment would be required to deliver these improvements. Given the low volume of business associated with Limavady Courthouse, this investment would not demonstrate value for money or effective application of Managing Public Money NI¹⁸ guidance. This would also be particularly challenging for NICTS given the long-standing and forecast budgetary constraints faced by the Department, requiring a prioritised and evidence-based decision-making approach to its investment decisions.

Limavady court business has been held at alternative courthouses since March 2020, and there is no operational requirement within NICTS to bring Limavady Courthouse back into use for scheduled hearings. If the Courthouse was to be re-opened, it would only be required for less than half a day a week. Using and maintaining any venue that is only required to be open for less than 10% of a working week does not represent good value for money for the citizens of Northern Ireland.

In terms of staff resourcing costs, because business has continued to be heard during the temporary closure, there is little impact on NICTS staff resourcing whether business is heard in Limavady Courthouse or Coleraine Courthouse. There may however be an impact on justice sector partners such as NI Prison Service who have highlighted higher security costs to attend and resource custody within Limavady Courthouse due to the identified functional deficiencies and safety concerns.

While the building is not in operational use, NICTS continues to incur costs and ongoing liability. In 2024-25, NICTS incurred annual running costs of around £51,000 for Limavady Courthouse, including maintenance, rates, security, energy and water and sewerage costs.

From April 2020 to December 2025, NICTS incurred total running costs of around £264,500 for Limavady Courthouse, with a further capital investment of around £63,700 for the boiler replacement. This necessary expenditure has allowed continued protection of the building fabric, and ensured that thermal comfort can be effectively managed should the building be brought back into use.

¹⁸ <https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/articles/managing-public-money-ni-mpmni>

The closure of Limavady Courthouse would reduce current operating costs and significantly reduce longer term liability costs. This will enable NICTS to better prioritise resources towards managing an estate with properties that are better equipped to facilitate modern justice services.

Aim 3 - Improved Value for Money

3b Our estate investments facilitate the delivery of services that are proportionate and accessible

Poor alignment

In strategically managing its estate, NICTS need to make decisions about how to maintain effective access to justice while determining the most appropriate and cost-effective locations for our courts and tribunals. NICTS need the right courts and tribunals in the right places, with appropriate facilities and capacity to meet operational requirements.

Limavady business volumes are the lowest in the North Eastern Division, and the lowest in Northern Ireland overall. Maintaining and significantly investing in a building that is not used for operational business, or is used for only 10% of available time, is not proportionate in the context of the demands of the wider estate. There is sufficient building capacity for Limavady Adult Magistrates business to continue be heard at Coleraine Courthouse.

As outlined in relation to Improved User Experience (1b), proximity to the courthouse is a relevant in terms of access to justice. Taking all considerations into account, including the screenings and impact assessments, NICTS considers that that increased travel associated with the permanent reallocation of Limavady Adult Magistrates Court business to Coleraine Courthouse is reasonable and justified by the legitimate aim of providing Limavady court users with access to higher quality, safer, more modern and more accessible courthouse facilities.

NICTS has not identified any compelling evidence which indicates that the reallocation of Limavady Adult Magistrates business to alternative courthouse venues since March 2020 has had a detrimental impact on access to justice from a service delivery perspective.

Analysis of the number of non-appearance bench warrants issued for Limavady Courthouse between 2014 and 2025 does not suggest that the current reallocation of Adult Magistrates business to Coleraine Courthouse has made a significant impact on the ability of defendants

to appear before the Court. In 2025 there were 18 warrants issued in relation to Limavady Adult Magistrates Court business, the lowest figure across the last decade.

Year	Non-appearance bench warrants issued	Limavady business received	Non-appearance bench warrants issued as a % of Limavady business received
2014	40	741	5.4%
2015	33	661	5.0%
2016	35	654	5.4%
2017	50	577	8.7%
2018	61	595	10.3%
2019	50	603	8.3%
2020	23	381	6.0%
2021	66	556	11.9%
2022	53	556	9.5%
2023	48	495	9.7%
2024	22	561	3.9%
2025 <i>(provisional)</i>	18	401	4.5%

Aim 3 - Improved Value for Money

3c Our estate supports innovation in service delivery, by both enabling, and availing of, co-location opportunities

Poor alignment

Providing access to co-location opportunities facilitates improved operational resilience and knowledge sharing for Courthouse users.

Limavady Courthouse offers extremely limited opportunities for co-location as facilities are limited to 1 judicial chamber, 1 consultation room and 1 waiting room for victims and witnesses. There are no rooms allocated to justice sector support organisations such as Public Prosecution Service or NSPCC.

By comparison, Coleraine has 3 judicial chambers, staff meeting rooms, 6 consultation rooms, 2 video-link booths to facilitate remote consultation with legal representatives, and

offices allocated to Victim Support NI, Public Prosecution Service, Probation Board NI, and Women’s Aid.

During pre-consultation engagement, NICTS was asked to consider the feasibility of locating a Courthouse within Limavady Police Station to deal with Adult Magistrates cases. NICTS subsequently engaged with PSNI and justice sector partners regarding this suggestion. While there are space and facilities available, capital investment would be required to reconfigure the available space to accommodate court operations. Due to the low and decreasing business volumes in Limavady, investment in an alternative venue within the town would be extremely difficult to justify given the long-standing budgetary constraints faced by the Department.

In addition, concerns were raised in relation to the perceptions of a co-location including for a defendant and their legal representatives and the negative impact that court attendance within a PSNI station could have upon victims and witnesses.

Based on these considerations, NICTS considers that the relocation of Limavady Adult Magistrates business to Limavady Police Station is not feasible.

Aim 4: Improved sustainability

Aim 4 - Improved Sustainability	
4a	Our estate has the minimum possible impact on the environment and contributes to Executive targets to achieve net zero
	Poor alignment

Overall, in 2024-25, buildings across the NICTS estate produced 2,366,806 kilograms of CO₂ – the equivalent of driving 6,027,212 miles in an average petrol car or charging a smartphone 191,348,627 times. Good progress has been made in reducing emissions, with 1,610 tons of carbon emissions saved since 2021-22 and a reduction in energy bills of over £1million. Further action and significant investment are required, and NICTS has published a Sustainability Delivery Plan¹⁹ to help the Northern Ireland Civil Service meet its obligations under the Climate Change Act and Climate Action Plan.

Despite being temporarily closed, Limavady was responsible for 0.4% of overall NICTS emissions in 2024-25 – 10,481 kilograms of CO₂ - the equivalent of driving 26,690 miles in

¹⁹ <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/justice-today-justice-tomorrow>

an average petrol car or charging a smartphone 847,355 times. While this is a small proportion of overall emissions, it is not justified by the delivery of any court business in that venue. As no court business is being heard at Limavady Courthouse, the ongoing generation of carbon emissions relates solely to the maintenance of a vacant building. Undertaking any improvement or construction works at Limavady Courthouse could only be justified if the building was to be sufficiently utilised to meet a demonstrable operational need. A 10% building utilisation rate would not justify significant expenditure in sustainability projects such as those being taken forward elsewhere in the estate, e.g. installation of PV (solar) panels or installation of LED lighting.

As detailed above, the reallocation of Limavady court business to Coleraine Courthouse has resulted in increased travel requirements, and it has also therefore resulted in increased carbon emissions. It is not possible to quantify the exact increase in travel and carbon emissions due to the variations in the location the journey starts from, the start time, the method of travel and an absence of information about the number of people attending court for each deposition. However, an estimation could be made based on 49 court sittings, each by 63 court users (judge, 5 legal representatives, 47 defendants/plaintiffs, 10 witnesses/professional attendees) and each affected by the average travel increase of 27.5km (17.1miles); resulting in additional carbon emissions of 134,978 kilograms²⁰.

While acknowledging the impact in terms of increased carbon emissions at regional level due to the additional travel, NICTS considers that this is reasonable, justified and mitigated by a number of factors:

- NICTS has developed a Sustainability Delivery Plan (SDP) to help the Northern Ireland Civil Service meet its obligations under the Climate Change Act and Climate Action Plan, and this additional travel doesn't present any risks to the delivery of the SDP.
- Not all participants in proceedings will physically attend court. As noted in the travel impact assessment, travel is reducing due to increasing uptake of remote attendance through Sightlink.
- This is a generous estimation as some court users will actually travel a shorter distance to attend Coleraine Courthouse.

²⁰ 63 people x 27.5km x 49 sittings = 84,892km. 1km driving = 1.59 kg CO₂. 84892 x 1.59 = 134,978

- This is a generous estimation as not all journeys will generate this level of carbon emissions. Court users may undertake active travel, public transport or use more energy efficient cars.
- Some Speeding Up Justice initiatives would decrease physical attendance in the court estate, for example by increasing the incidence of out of court disposals²¹, such as the recent proposed expansion of out of court penalty notices.
- 10,481 kilograms of carbon emissions will be offset by the closure of Limavady Courthouse.
- Revenue released through this proposal could be invested in higher impact activities to improve sustainability and reduce carbon emissions across the wider estate.

NICTS acknowledges an increase in carbon emissions related to the reallocation of Limavady court business to Coleraine Courthouse but does not consider this to be a risk to the delivery of the NICTS Sustainability Delivery Plan. NICTS will continue to contribute to Departmental sustainability actions to meet our obligations under the Climate Change Act and Climate Action Plan.

Aim 4 - Improved Sustainability

4b Our estate facilitates sustainable ways of working and supports active travel and wellbeing

Acceptable alignment

Active Travel is travelling for everyday journeys through activities such as walking, cycling, jogging, or using public transport. The travel analysis illustrates that both Limavady Courthouse and Coleraine Courthouse are accessible by public transport. There are no facilities for bicycle storage at either courthouse. The close proximity of Limavady Courthouse within the town centre is likely to encourage active travel, as illustrated in the short travel distances within the Travel Impact Assessment.

In terms of the wellbeing facilities for court staff in Limavady Courthouse, the staff office has a limited floor area of 19m² which includes a public counter. There is a kitchenette but there are no separate facilities for showering, rest, private conversations or virtual meetings. The size and footprint of the building means that opportunities to sufficiently improve the quality of the space for staff are very limited. By comparison, Coleraine Courthouse has a 30m²

²¹ Subject to public consultation, policy and legislation

kitchen area and 4 digitally enabled meeting rooms available to staff, in addition to 178m² office space.

Aim 4 - Improved Sustainability

4c Our estate embodies best practice in the care and protection of our heritage assets

Poor alignment

While Limavady Courthouse is not a Listed Building, it has been recorded on the NI Buildings Database to be of architectural or historic interest. It is an important civic building which almost certainly benefits the built environment within the town.

The 2011 Limavady Masterplan²² describes a proposed Area of Townscape Character (ATC) which would focus on Main Street Limavady, including the Courthouse. In November 2024, Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council approved a Review of the 2011 Limavady Town Centre Masterplan²³. In relation to Limavady Courthouse, the 2024 Review states:

“Protection of our built heritage not only by understanding the needs and maintenance of the building fabric but also meaningfully updating the buildings use. An occupied and active building is important for architectural heritage structure. This ensures that the building is monitored and observed regularly and any updates or improvement works or repairs are carried out in a timely manner. Social sustainability when coupled with the active use of Architectural Built Heritage can lead to successful community focused future proofed services. Community-led proposals for ensuring the long-term use of the Courthouse would be welcomed”.

The maintenance of heritage assets in active use and good repair is part of a sustainable approach to the environment, and one which is supported by the Department for Communities’ Heritage Environment Division²⁴. Limavady Courthouse is not currently used for court business. Continuing to own and maintain a surplus asset or one that is infrequently used is inconsistent with a sustainable approach to the environment, and contrary to best practice guidance on Strategic Asset Management. Developing policy on the future of

²² https://causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk/uploads/general/Limavady_Masterplan_-_Low-Res_.pdf

²³ https://old.causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk/uploads/general/241119_LD_Item_8_-_Review_of_Limavady_Town_Centre_Masterplan.pdf

²⁴ <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/protocol-care-government-historic-estates>

Limavady Courthouse will establish whether the building is surplus to NICTS operational needs.

If Limavady Courthouse was to be re-opened, the low business volumes mean that future investment in the building by NICTS is highly likely to be below the level required to achieve, and then maintain the building to, a good standard. Sporadic use of a heritage asset is inconsistent with the Protocol 7 for the Care of the Government Historic Estate: "Work to keep buildings in active use". This would lead to an increasing likelihood that the heritage asset would become at risk or under threat, which would be detrimental to the local area. Disposal of the Limavady Courthouse is in line with NICS Strategic Asset Management guidance, creating an opportunity, through another party, to increase active use of a heritage building in Limavady town centre for the benefit of its citizens.

Disposal of public sector assets through the NICS policy is however dependent upon third party interest and their ability to engage with the disposals process in a timely and realistic way, taking into account their governance responsibilities and funding availability. Through this consultation process, NICTS is providing early notification of a potential opportunity to acquire the property for an alternative use. As part of the public consultation, views are welcomed on potential future uses of Limavady Courthouse.

Strategic Asset Assessment Conclusion

The Strategic Asset Assessment has concluded that the use of Limavady Courthouse is poorly aligned with the aims of the Estate Strategy and is no longer adequate for the operational delivery of NICTS services.

Aim 1 Improved User Experience	Aim 2 Improved Resilience	Aim 3 Improved Value for Money	Aim 4 Improved Sustainability
Strategic Outcomes			
<p>1a Our estate provides quality facilities for the judiciary, our staff, service users and other justice and legal partners</p> <p>1b Our estate is inclusive and accessible for everyone, and supports the needs of victims and vulnerable users</p> <p>1c Our estate provides the physical infrastructure to support a modern digital environment</p>	<p>2a Our estate is actively maintained to reduce risks and ensure statutory and regulatory compliance</p> <p>2b Our estate provides a secure environment for the Judiciary, our staff, and all court users</p> <p>2c Our estate provides operational resilience that supports continuity of service and can readily adapt to change</p>	<p>3a Our estate is operated and maintained in a financially sustainable manner</p> <p>3b Our estate investments facilitate the delivery of services that are proportionate and accessible</p> <p>3c Our estate supports innovation in service delivery, by both enabling, and availing of, co-location opportunities</p>	<p>4a Our estate has the minimum possible impact on the environment and, contributes to Executive targets to achieve net zero</p> <p>4b Our estate facilitates sustainable ways of working and supports active travel and wellbeing</p> <p>4c Our estate embodies best practice in the care and protection of our heritage assets</p>

Strategic Asset Management Options

Managing Public Money Northern Ireland²⁵ (MPMNI) states that “*Accounting Officers of public sector organisations are responsible for managing their assets. This aspect of financial management covers the acquisition, use, maintenance, and disposal of assets for the benefit of the organisations and indeed for the public sector as a whole.*” It requires a public body to have an appropriate asset management strategy to define how it acquires, maintains, tracks, deploys and disposes of the various kinds of assets it uses, and an Asset Management Plan (AMP) which describes how it will tactically maintain, modernise and reorganise its assets to align with its corporate plan and overarching objectives. Figure 1, taken from Chapter 4 of MPNI, illustrates the suggested steps for developing an asset management plan.

²⁵ <https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/articles/managing-public-money-ni-mpmni>

Box A4.15B: Steps for developing Asset Management Plans (AMPs)

- review the asset register to assess its adequacy for the organisation’s objectives and functions;
- plan how retained assets will be used efficiently for the organisation’s core functions;
- plan asset acquisitions, e.g. to extend, modify or replace the existing asset base;
- identify disposals and once decided upon, disposals should be as swift as the market will allow with reasonable value for money. DoF approval is required for spending or retaining receipts;
- plan any loans of assets, with charges and conditions for their return, liability, damage; and
- consider whether any retained assets have potential to generate revenue through commercial services.

Figure 1 -Source - MPMNI Chapter 4

Based on the conclusion of the Strategic Asset Review, NICTS considered a number of strategic management options in relation to Limavady Courthouse.

Option 1: Change of use

Could Limavady Courthouse be more effectively used by NICTS for an alternative operational purpose which is more suited to the building?

Not recommended

- There is no operational demand for increased capacity across the Estate in terms of alternative operational uses
- The spatial constraints and functional deficiencies limit alternative NICTS operational use, particularly due to the confined waiting areas
- In the context of a challenging budgetary position, it would be difficult to justify any investment to facilitate alternative use where there is no operational demand

Option 2: Maintenance

Could Limavady Courthouse be effectively used if maintained in its current condition?

Not recommended

- Essential maintenance activities have continued during the period of temporary closure, but the identified functional deficiencies mean that the building is no longer

adequate for NICTS operational use

- Even if this was not the case, the low business volumes mean the building would only be used for 10% of the working week – this does not achieve effective use or value for money, and increases risks in terms of care of a heritage asset
- In the context of a challenging budgetary position, it is becoming increasingly difficult to justify maintaining an unused, or underused, building

Option 3: Modernisation

Would significant redesign and modernisation of Limavady Courthouse lead to more effective use of the building by NICTS?

Not recommended

- The options for redesign and modernisation are limited by the size of the site and grounds, and surrounding boundaries
- Even if the functional deficiencies could be addressed, the low business volumes mean the building is only used for 10% of the working week – this does not achieve effective use or value for money
- In the context of a challenging budgetary position, it will be extremely difficult to justify significant investment in an unused, or underused, building

Option 4: Disposal

Would disposal of Limavady Courthouse be beneficial to NICTS and the wider public sector?

Recommended

- Disposal would benefit NICTS through reduced operating costs
- Disposal would benefit NICTS through reduced ongoing asset liability
- Revenue released could be reinvested within the NICTS budget
- Bringing the venue back into active use through an alternative owner would be of benefit to the local community
- Bringing the venue back into active use by an alternative owner would benefit the wider public sector, in terms of fulfilling our responsibilities on the care of heritage assets

Impact assessments

NICTS has undertaken a number of impact assessments in relation to the proposal to permanently close and dispose of Limavady Courthouse.

Feedback on any impacts that have not been considered by NICTS are welcomed. NICTS will take account of the information gathered through this consultation and consider other impact assessments if required.

- **Equality Screening**

As a public authority under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the Department is required to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity. This legislation also requires public authorities to identify whether a policy has a differential impact upon relevant groups; the nature and extent of that impact; and whether such impact is justifiable. These obligations are designed to ensure that equality and good relations considerations are made central to policy development.

This proposal has been subjected to an Equality Screening (which is available on the Department of Justice website). NICTS considers that the permanent closure of Limavady Courthouse does not have a differential impact on Section 75 groups in terms of Equality of Opportunity, but that the policy would better meet the needs of certain groups in terms of access to justice and supporting the needs of vulnerable court users (particularly groups of *age, men and women generally* and *disability*). The impact of increased travel has been considered in relation to the categories of *age, disability, men/women generally* and *those with dependants*. At this point, we do not consider that a full Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) is required due to the absence of a differential impact on Section 75 groups, the anticipated policy benefits and mitigations that are in place in terms of travel impact. However, NICTS will take account of the information gathered through this consultation and will revisit the Equality Screening if required.

- **Rural Needs Impact Assessment**

The Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016²⁶ places duty on Northern Ireland departments, district councils and the other public authorities listed in the Schedule to the Act to have due

²⁶ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2016/19/contents>

regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans, and when designing and delivering public services.

This proposal has been subjected to a Rural Needs Impact Assessment (which is available on the Department of Justice website). NICTS considers that the proposal is primarily driven by considerations which are common to those in rural areas and those in urban areas and delivers benefits to those in rural areas and those in urban areas. The impact of this proposal in terms of increased travel has been considered for both urban and rural areas, but NICTS considers this to be reasonable in the context of the anticipated benefits and in parity with travel requirements for other court users across NI. NICTS will take account of the information gathered through this consultation and revisit the Rural Needs Impact Assessment if required.

- **Legal Aid Impact Assessment**

The Department of Justice requires that any policy development within the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service or other government departments, must consider whether there will be either a potential impact on the workload of the courts or a legal aid cost.

This proposal has been subjected to a Legal Aid Impact Assessment screening (which is available on the Department of Justice website). NICTS considers that a full Legal Aid Impact Assessment is not required. NICTS will take account of the information gathered through this consultation and revisit the Legal Aid Impact Assessment if required.

- **Travel Impact Assessment**

This proposal has been subjected to a Travel Impact Assessment (which is available on the Department of Justice website). Further analysis of the impact of increased travel on particular groups has also been considered within the Equality Screening and the Rural Needs Impact Assessment.

Taking all considerations into account, including the screenings, impact assessments and mitigations, NICTS considers that increased travel associated with the permanent reallocation of Limavady Adult Magistrates Court business to Coleraine Courthouse is reasonable and justified by the legitimate aim of providing Limavady court users with access to higher quality, safer, more modern and more accessible courthouse facilities.

Consultation questions

The proposal outlined in this paper is aimed at delivering improved user experience, value for money, resilience and sustainability across the NICTS estate, through the permanent closure of Limavady Courthouse and reallocation of Limavady Adult Magistrates Court business from Limavady Courthouse to an alternative courthouse in the NICTS estate.

Further detail on the policy considerations and the impact of this proposal on NICTS stakeholders has been provided within this consultation paper and the impact assessments published on the Department of Justice website.

Through this consultation, we are seeking the views of local stakeholders, court users, judiciary, legal representatives, justice sector and community-based organisations across Northern Ireland to better understand the impact that the proposal may have. Anyone with an interest in, or views on, the subject is encouraged to consider this proposal and respond to the consultation so that their views can be considered in the development of policy in relation to the future of Limavady Courthouse.

NICTS would welcome views on the following:

- Is the proposal to permanently close Limavady Courthouse reasonable and justified, taking into account the considerations set out in this consultation paper and impact assessments? *(Yes/No/Prefer not to say responses)*
- Is there any other information or comment you would like to provide in relation to the proposal or impact assessments, to inform the decision in relation to the future of Limavady Courthouse? *(Text)*
- Should a decision be taken to close Limavady Courthouse, do you have any comments in relation to potential future use of the building? *(Text)*

How to respond

The consultation will run from Friday 29 May 2026 to Friday 21 August 2026 for a period of 12 weeks. All responses must be submitted by 11.59pm on Friday 21 August 2026.

NICTS encourages you to respond to the consultation using the online form accessed through the following link:
<https://consultations.nidirect.gov.uk/doj/limavady-courthouse>

Alternatively, you can send comments or enquiries by email to NICTSConsultations@courtsni.gov.uk or by post to:

Estate Strategy Team – Limavady Courthouse Consultation
Northern Ireland Courts & Tribunals Service
Laganside House
23-27 Oxford Street
Belfast
BT1 3LA

You can also use these contact details to request copies of the consultation documents in alternative formats (such as Braille, large print, translations etc).

Privacy, confidentiality and data protection

To be as transparent as possible, we may publish all responses in our Summary of Responses paper when released, except where the respondent indicates that they are an individual acting in a private capacity. All responses from organisations and individuals responding in a professional capacity may be published (please see Privacy Notice below).

For this reason, in the online consultation, we ask for your name, email address and about the organisation you represent, however, please do not provide any other personal or identifying information. Any personal information, if provided, will be removed from the published responses as will any inappropriate or offensive comments, otherwise we may publish them in full.

Your response, and all other responses to this consultation, may also be disclosed on request in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR); however, all disclosures will be in line with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (EU) 2016/679. Subject to certain limited provisos, the FOIA gives members of the public a right of access to any information held by a public authority, in this case, the Department. This right of access to information includes information provided in response to a consultation.

If you would prefer for your response and/or organisation not to be published, again, please indicate this through the relevant questions in the consultation. If you want the information that you provide to be treated as confidential it would be helpful if you could explain why you regard the information you have provided as confidential, so that this may be considered if the Department should receive a request for the information under the FOIA or EIR.

Privacy Notice – Consultations (DoJ)

Data Controller Name:	Department of Justice (DoJ)
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Data Protection Officer Name:	DoJ Data Protection Officer
Email:	DataProtectionOfficer@justice-ni.gov.uk

Being transparent and providing accessible information to individuals about how we may use personal data is a key element of the [Data Protection Act \(DPA\)](#). The Department of Justice (DoJ) is committed to building trust and confidence in our ability to process your personal information and protect your privacy.

Purpose for processing

We will process personal data provided in response to consultations for the purpose of informing the development of our policy, guidance, or other regulatory work in the subject area of the request for views. We may publish a summary of the consultation responses and, in some cases, the responses themselves but these will not contain any personal data. We will not publish the names or contact details of respondents but will include the names of organisations responding.

If you have indicated that you would be interested in contributing to further Department work on the subject matter covered by the consultation, then we might process your contact details to get in touch with you.

Lawful basis for processing

The lawful basis we are relying on to process your personal data is Article 6(1) (e) of the GDPR, which allows us to process personal data when this is necessary for the performance of our public tasks in our capacity as a Government Department. We will only process any special category personal data you provide, which reveals racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious belief, health or sexual life/orientation when it is necessary for reasons of substantial public interest under Article 9(2) (g) of the GDPR, in the exercise of the function of the Department, and to monitor equality.

How will your information be used and shared?

We process the information internally for the above stated purpose. We don't intend to share your personal data with any third party. Any specific requests from a third party for us to share your personal data with them will be dealt with in accordance the provisions of the data protection laws.

How long will we keep your information?

We will retain consultation response information until our work on the subject matter of the consultation is complete, and in line with the Department's approved [Retention and Disposal Schedule](#).

What are your rights?

- You have the right to obtain confirmation that your data is being [processed, and access to your personal data](#)
- You are entitled to have personal data [rectified if it is inaccurate or incomplete](#)
- You have a right to have personal data [erased and to prevent processing](#), in specific circumstances
- You have the right to ['block' or suppress processing](#) of personal data, in specific circumstances
- You have the right to [data portability](#), in specific circumstances
- You have the right to [object to the processing](#), in specific circumstances
- You have rights in relation to [automated decision making and profiling](#).

How to complain if you are not happy with how we process your personal information

If you wish to request access, object or raise a complaint about how we have handled your data, you can contact our Data Protection Officer using the details above. If you are not satisfied with our response or believe we are not processing your personal data in accordance with the law, you can complain to the Information Commissioner at:

Information Commissioner's Office

Wycliffe House

Water Lane

Wilmslow

Cheshire SK9 5AF

casework@ico.org.uk